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2 in Congress Offer Compromise Plans on Aid to Nicaraguan Rebels

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WASHINGTON, March 12 — In an effort to head off a defeat for President Reagan, two of his supporters on Capitol Hill suggested compromise proposals today that would combine United States aid to the Nicaraguan rebels with a stronger push for a negotiated settlement in Central America.

Senator Bob Dole, Republican of Kansas, the majority leader, conveyed the "general direction" of these and other potential compromises today to Donald T. Regan, the White House chief of staff, according to a spokesman for the Senator. Mr. Dole reiterated his belief that without a compromise the President's push to aid the Nicaraguan insurgents would probably be rejected in Congress next week, the spokesman added.

Under both proposals, the Administration would receive the \$100 million requested by Mr. Reagan for the rebels, known as contras. At the same time, the President would agree to pursue negotiations with the Nicaraguan Government. If the talks made progress, the aid to the insurgents would be delayed or withheld.

Larry Speakes, the President's chief spokesman, said later that the President was willing to listen to proposed compromises but that he still stood behind his request for \$100 million in aid.

'The Best Way to Go'

"He thinks that's the best way to go," Mr. Speakes said. "He doesn't want any halfway measures. They haven't worked before and they haven't worked now."

But the President, seemingly in a gesture of flexibility, held open the possibility that his newly named special envoy for Central America, Philip C. Habib, might contact Nicaraguan Government leaders in the course of his mission to the region.

"There has to be one last clear chance for negotiations," said Representative Ike Skelton, Democrat of Missouri, who drafted one of the compromise plans. He said the failure of the Administration to pursue a peaceful settlement with the Sandinistas was the "biggest complaint" voiced by lawmakers about the President's policy.

It was not clear tonight, however, whether the plans advanced by Mr. Skelton and Senator Richard G. Lugar, an Indiana Republican, would sway enough votes to carry the day for the President. Several lawmakers said the plans gave too much leeway to the Ad-

ministration and amounted to little more than a "fig leaf," as Senator Jim Sasser, Democrat of Tennessee, put it.

"There has to be some control of the funds," said Senator Carl Levin, Democrat of Michigan. "Otherwise we're giving the President a blank check."

Ridiculous, Reagan Says

Meanwhile, President Reagan strongly denied that his Administration had avoided talks with the Sandinistas. At a White House meeting marking the departure of Mr. Habib, Mr. Reagan said his critics "have been making ridiculous noises for a long time and this is one of the most ridiculous."

As talk of compromise increased on Capitol Hill, Administration officials tried to calm fears that their aid proposal would also allow the President to tap secret funds controlled by the Central Intelligence Agency to aid the contras. When Congress agreed to allot \$27 million in nonlethal aid to the rebels last year, they specifically barred use of C.I.A. money, but some House Democrats have argued that this ban would be ended by the President's bill.

C.I.A. officials said at a closed-door briefing of the Senate Armed Services Committee today that the Democrats' interpretation of the Administration's proposal was not correct, according to a lawmaker who was present. Lawyers for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence also believe that the funds would not be released, a spokesman for the panel said.

But Senator Dave Durenberger, Republican of Minnesota, who heads the intelligence committee, said in an interview that many senators were concerned about the Administration's use of C.I.A. funds in Central America and other regions. Recently, the White House brushed aside Congressional objections and decided to send \$15 million in secret aid to rebels fighting the Government of Angola.

Want to 'Tighten Up'

"We're going to go after the contingency fund issue," Mr. Durenberger said. He added that many lawmakers would like to "tighten up" Congressional control of the secret funds, but a committee spokesman said that no specific legislation had yet been drafted.

Under law, the Administration is required to inform the intelligence committees in both houses of any plans to finance covert operations. The panels can express objections to the plans, but they cannot stop the Administration from acting.

On a related issue, the House intelligence committee heard testimony in secret session today about legislation that would require the Administration to get Congressional approval for its Angolan operation. Representative Lee H. Hamilton of Indiana, the chairman of the committee and the author of the bill, said that major foreign policy issues, such as American involvement in Angola, ought to be reviewed "by all members of Congress, and not just a handful" that serve on the intelligence panels.

At the White House, President Reagan left open the possibility that Mr. Habib, his special envoy, might venture to Managua, although that stop is not now on his schedule. Speaking of such a possibility, the President said, "If there was any benefit and that presented an opportunity, I am sure that he would."

"I trust in his judgment," Mr. Reagan added. "If anything comes up that would show there might be a prospect for any profit in doing that, I am sure he would make that decision."

On the negotiations issue, Representative Skelton outlined his proposal in a letter to President Reagan. Under this plan, \$30 million in humanitarian assistance would be sent immediately to the rebels; \$70 million in military aid would be withheld for 90 days while the Administration tried to revive negotiations with the Sandinistas.

At the end of that period, the military aid would be released "should the negotiations fail," Mr. Skelton wrote. Evaluation of the outcome of the talks would be left to the Administration, the Missouri Democrat said, but officials would have to defend their judgment before key Congressional committees.

The plan advanced by Senator Lugar is similar. The \$100 million in aid would be released immediately and the Sandinistas would be urged to hold elections and stop aiding leftist rebels in El Salvador.

The aid to the contras would be suspended if the Sandinistas accepted these conditions, according to Mark Helmke, Mr. Lugar's spokesman.